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(72) Inventor(s)

Mark Henry Stanley
Terence Gordon Woolley**(54) Amusement apparatus**

(57) In an amusement apparatus comprising a machine having a game of chance, eg a fruit machine having reels 5, 6, 7, in combination with a game of skill, eg a crane machine, one of the wins on the game of chance machine 15 arranged to enable play of the game of skill, and the number of wins on the game of chance machine is adjusted according to the number of wins on the game of skill machine. As described the apparatus is controlled by a central processing unit, and the crane machine includes an outlet chute for prizes with a sensor in the chute informing the central processing unit when a prize is dispensed.

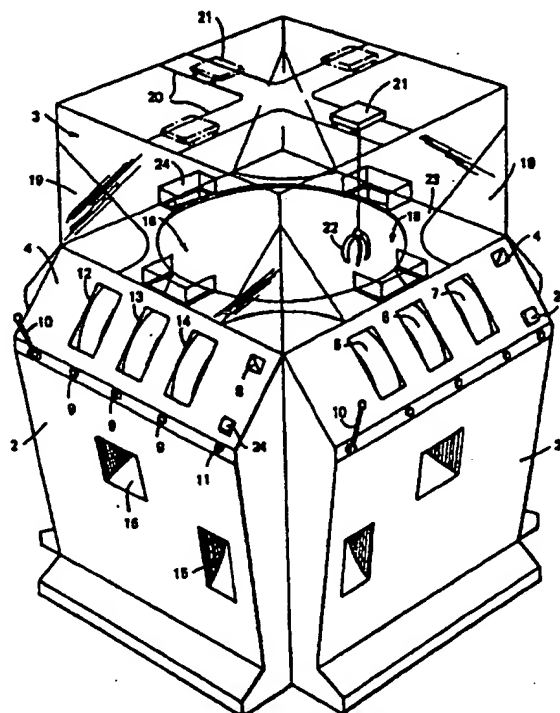


FIG. 1

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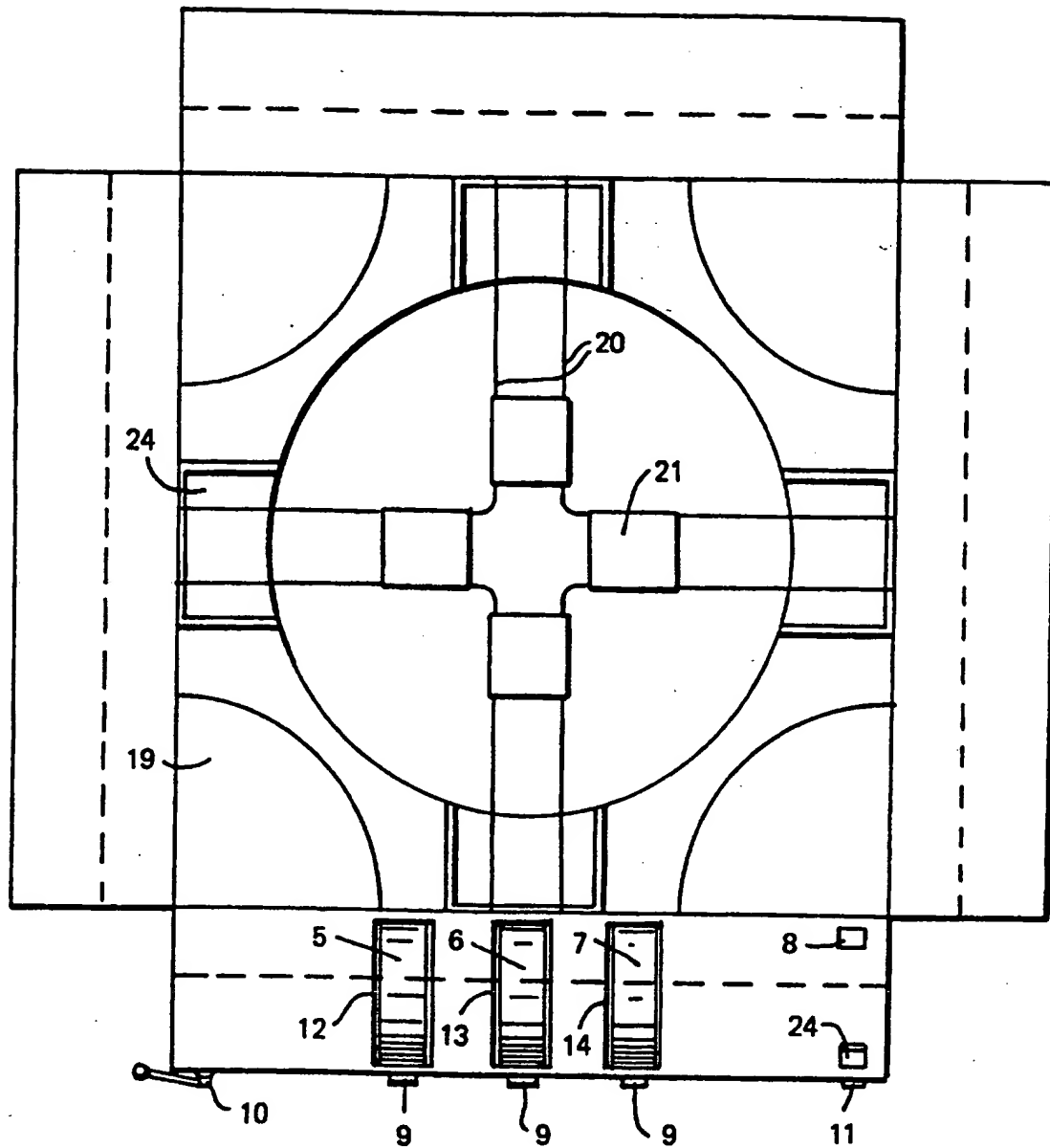


FIG. 2

Agent's ref: P01295GB

AMUSEMENT APPARATUS

The invention relates to an amusement apparatus, and particularly to an amusement apparatus adapted to award prizes.

One type of amusement apparatus, commonly known as a "fruit machine" includes a number of drums typically three, mounted on independent axes in horizontal alignment behind respective windows in a front panel. Each drum has a number of symbols arranged around its periphery. Upon insertion of a coin or token into a coin receiving slot and actuation of a control button, the drums are caused to rotate. Rotation of the drums is controlled by a central processing unit which will stop each drum independently of the others. Where a specific combination of symbols is aligned and displayed on the windowed panel, the machine will pay out a predetermined monetary prize. The apparatus may include a display panel having flashing lights and illuminated pictures and further chances of winning are provided which involve, for example, stopping a flashing light over a particular design. Additional rewards may be granted in the form of free games or "nudges" where one or more drums are moved forward to display the next symbol in an attempt to obtain a winning combination of symbols.

A further type of amusement apparatus is known as a "crane". A crane is a large transparent case which contains in its centre an apparatus designed to pick up various prize items such as a soft toy, watch, and the like. This apparatus includes a large electro/mechanical hand which is designed to pick up an item. This hand can be moved about the case in various directions by gears and pulleys and is controlled by the central processing unit. Upon insertion of a coin or token into the coin receiving slot a player will gain control of the electro/mechanical hand apparatus by using a set of control buttons or a joy stick for a predetermined length of time to move the hand to try to position the hand over a prize. When in position over the desired prize, the user presses a button and the fingers of the hand open, the hand now descends to the floor of the case, the fingers close trying to grab the prize and the hand moves to an outlet chute, the fingers now open as if they are releasing a prize. The electro/mechanical hand then returns to its predetermined stationary position for the next play. The apparatus involves skill and judgement to control the hand and pick up and deposit a prize into the receptacle.

The present invention provides amusement apparatus comprising both the "fruit machine" and "crane" types of amusement apparatus arranged such that a win situation obtained on the fruit machine enables actuation of a crane machine.

According to the invention in one aspect there is provided an amusement

apparatus comprising a machine having a game of chance in combination

with a machine having a game of skill and a central processing unit, in which the central processing unit is arranged to present a minimum number of wins relative to the games paid for on the game of chance machine, one of the wins being arranged to enable play of the game of skill, the central processing unit also being arranged to adjust the number of wins on the game of chance machine according to the number of wins on the game of skill machine.

Preferably, the central processing unit is arranged to present a selected proportion of wins which enable the game of skill.

Preferably the game of chance is an amusement with prize machine and the game of skill is a crane machine. Preferably the crane machine includes an outlet for the presentation of a prize, and the chute includes a sensor to sense the passage of a prize out of the outlet or the absence of such passage to transmit that information to the central processing unit.

Preferably each machine has its own central processing unit and the units are connected to each other directly or via a master central processing unit or one master unit may be present.

In a preferred feature the game of chance comprises a casing having a plurality of rotatable drums mounted therein, each drum having symbols arranged about its outer peripheral face, means to actuate rotation of the drums; means to control and stop rotation of each drum independently of

the others; the casing having a window corresponding to each drum whereby to display the symbols; at least one combination of symbols indicating a win situation; means to detect a win situation and thereby grant a prize, in combination with a game of skill which comprises a transparent case, prizes arranged on the floor of the case; a movable arm to grab a prize and to dispense a won prize via an outlet.

Under the Gaming Act, a amusement with prizes machine must be arranged to provide a proportion of the stake money as prizes, in the form of money or moneysworth. When the amusement with prizes game results in a win which enables the crane machine, there is a risk that the player will not have sufficient skill or luck to win a prize in that game, as a result of which he will receive no prize. This will upset the ratio of prizes dispensed compared to the money staked. It is accordingly a preferred feature of the invention that the outlet chute of the crane machine includes a sensor e.g. a micro switch to sense whether a prize is won or not won and to transmit that information to the central processor which can accordingly adjust the proportion of prizes to be given by the amusement with prizes machine to the required minimum.

In order that the invention may be well understood, it will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:-

Figure 1 is a perspective view from the side and front of an amusement apparatus according to the invention.

Figure 2 is a plan view of the amusement apparatus of Figure 1.

An amusement apparatus 1 comprises a polyhedral base 2 upon which is mounted a transparent cuboid case 3. The upper faces of the base 2 form opaque panels 4 decorated in an aesthetic manner, each arranged at an angle to connect with bottom edges of the transparent case. Each panel 4 includes three windows 5, 6, 7, in horizontal alignment, and a slot 8 to accept a coin or token of specific value. A number of control buttons 9, 10, 11 are mounted on each panel 4, the function of which will be described below. Eight receptacles 15 are provided in the base of 2 of the apparatus to dispense monetary prizes and also goods prizes such as soft toys as will be explained below.

The transparent case 3 provides the crane game and contains a rotatable disc 16 mounted on a vertical axis at a small distance away from the floor of the case 3. The disc 16 includes a narrow wall 18 around its periphery. A number of prizes (not shown) are placed on the disc 16 and are retained by the wall 18 and are forced into the centre of the disc 16 by barriers 19. The transparent case 3 contains at its ceiling height four double tracks 20 which run from the centre of the machine towards the case 3 edges. On the top of each of these tracks 20 is an electric motor 21 on wheels (similar to a miniature train). From the bottom of this electric motor 21 is suspended a

system of gears and pulleys which operates an electro/mechanical hand 22. On the floor of the base 3 is a floor 23 which surrounds the rotating disc 16. On each side of the floor 23 is a receptacle 24 cut out of the floor 23 for the goods prizes to be dropped into.

The base 2 contains a central processing unit (CPU) to control the amusement with prizes (AWP) game and another CPU to control the crane game. The CPU for the AWP is arranged such that a selected winning line will enable the player to play the crane game, the other wins providing a cash prize. The crane hand may be arranged to start movement electronically or the AWP may incorporate a supplementary gear wheel to cause such movement. When the crane game is played a sensor in the outlet below the receptacle 24 detects whether or not a prize has been won and passes that information to the CPU. If no prize has been won, the CPU adjusts the proportion of cash prizes on the AWP so that the minimum payout required by law is achieved.

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CLAIMS

1. An amusement apparatus comprising a machine having a game of chance in combination with a machine having a game of skill and a central processing unit, in which the central processing unit is arranged to present a minimum number of wins relative to the games paid for on the game of chance machine, one of the wins being arranged to enable play of the game of skill, the central processing unit also being arranged to adjust the number of wins on the game of chance machine according to the number of wins on the game of skill machine.
2. Apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the central processing unit is arranged to present a selected number of wins which enable the game of skill machine.
3. Apparatus according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein the game of chance is an amusement with prizes machine and the game of skill is a crane machine.
4. Apparatus according to Claim 3, wherein the crane machine includes an outlet for the presentation of a prize, and the chute includes a sensor to sense the passage of a prize out of the outlet or the absence

of such passage and to transmit that information to the central processing unit.

5. Apparatus according to any preceding Claim, wherein each machine has a central processing unit and the units are connected to each other directly or via a master central processing unit.
6. Apparatus according to any preceding Claim, wherein the game of chance comprises a casing having rotatable drums mounted therein, each drum having symbols arranged about its outer peripheral face, means to actuate the rotation of the drums; means to control and stop rotation of each drum independently of the others; the casing having a window corresponding to each drum whereby to display the symbols; at least one combination of symbols indicating a win situation; means to detect a win situation and thereby grant a prize, in combination with a game of skill which comprises a transparent case, prizes arranged on the floor of the case; a movable arm to grab a prize and to dispense a won prize via an outlet.
7. Apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein the transparent case is superimposed on the casing.
8. Amusement apparatus substantially as described herein and with reference to the drawings.



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Claims searched: All

Examiner: Mr. G. Nicholls
Date of search: 19 October 1995

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.N): G4V (VAA)

Int Cl (Ed.6): G07F 17/32 17/34

Other:

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	GB 2072395 A (KENNEDY)	
A	GB 2066991 A (MIDDLETON)	

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
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